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Naval Operational Concept and Operational Maneuver from the Sea: Analysis in Operational Design

<u>by</u>

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A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Maritime Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

5 February 1999

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ABSTRACT

The Navy and Marine Corps have developed operational concepts to meet the anticipated requirements of future amphibious/expeditionary operations. Are these two operational concepts merely separate Service concepts, or are they capable of merging to form an integrated Naval Service Operational Concept? This paper addresses that question by analyzing the two operational concepts using selected elements of operational design.

INTRODUCTION

Doctrine and Concepts

The Military Services of the United States must be innovative, flexible, and progressive to meet the demands of an ever changing world and the aims of the National Security Strategy. Our National Military Strategy must provide the means to achieve those aims set-forth by the National Security Strategy. This strategy must be forward-looking and constantly prepared for change. Our Naval Services are currently meeting those demands by developing innovative and progressive operational concepts to achieve the aims set by our nation.

Military doctrine provides guidance, fundamental principles, and deals with the basic issue of how to best employ military power to achieve the strategic ends. Doctrine sets the common framework for conducting current operations. Operational concepts, on the other hand, are designed to meet the anticipated requirements of the future. These concepts may follow current doctrine, or they may reach beyond current doctrine. They take advantage of change, emerging technologies, and innovative ideas to meet forecasted challenges. Operational concepts are innovative techniques, procedures, and ideas designed to develop future operations. These operational concepts may, or may not, develop into doctrine. Operational concepts attempt to match the cycle of change in order to keep our concepts relevant to the situation.

Over the past several years, the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps have effectively adapted to change. Both Services have adapted operational concepts in anticipation of future challenges. The Navy and Marine Corps have developed operational concepts for future naval expeditionary operations – Forward...From the Sea. The Naval Operational Concept and Operational Maneuver from the Sea, respectively.

Thesis

These two operational concepts have been viewed by some as separate and independent Service concepts. It is the purpose of this paper to prove that point invalid and answer the question: "Is it possible to derive an integrated Naval Service Concept from the common elements of these single-Service concepts, or are the disparities too great to permit an effective meld." I will argue that these two operational concepts are effectively designed to meet future challenges, have been developing into an integrated Naval Service Operational Concept, and are relevant to future operational commanders.

Approach

I will approach this topic by using selected elements of operational design to compare, contrast, and analyze the two operational concepts. This analysis of operational design will identify the common elements among the two concepts that are applicable to an integrated Naval Service Operational Concept. This will be accomplished in the following manner:

- 1. Explain the **situation** that has brought about the requirement for change in amphibious operations.
- 2. Examine the common elements of the **operational concepts** developed by both Services.
- 3. Analyze how each of the operational concepts addresses the **key elements of the operational idea**: Maneuver, Fires, Sustainment, and Command and Control.
- 4. Determine relevance to future operational commanders in terms of the primary capabilities of naval expeditionary forces: Forward Presence, Crisis Response, Enabling Force, and in a Major Regional Contingency.

SITUATION

The Navy and Marine Corps' concepts for amphibious/expeditionary operations are changing. Why the change? Concepts change in response to change in the world situation. Three

major changes brought about the need for change in amphibious doctrine and concepts: threat, demographics, and technology.

Threat

The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the "Cold War" brought about major changes to the world. The United States no longer has a single major global threat to focus the efforts of our military. With the disintegration of our large and powerful threat, came the downsizing of our military: forces, budgets, and assets. The threat of total global warfare with a single identifiable foe is virtually gone for the time being. The change in world order has brought about a new threat: uncertainty and instability in the littoral regions of the world.

Demographics

Uncertainty and instability throughout the world has brought crisis and conflict to the forefront of our threats. Not one major foe, but numerous crisis and conflicts --ranging the entire spectrum of military operations - - has become the threat. World demographics have shifted to the littoral regions of the world:

- -Sixty percent of the world's population lives within 100 kilometers of the ocean.³
- -Seventy percent of the world's population lives within 320 kilometers of the ocean.⁴
- -Eighty percent of the world's capital cities are located in the littoral regions.⁵
- -A majority of cities with populations of more than one million are located in the littorals.⁶

Technology

Emerging technology is the final area that has brought about changes to amphibious concepts. Many technological improvements have been made over the past several years that have allowed for improvements in amphibious operations: communication and information technologies, mobility assets (AAAV, V-22, LCAC, etc.), fire support assets, and methods for

sustainment. These changes have improved our speed of response, increased maneuverability, increased operational reach, improved command, control, and information systems, and increased support capabilities (sustainment and fires). This has resulted in the capability to operate from the sea.

Results

The combination of these changes has resulted in a need to improve our concepts of amphibious operations. Our focus is no longer on a single identifiable threat, but spans the entire spectrum of military operations. Our naval forces must be able to respond to this evolution. This requires a credible, forward deployable, power projection capability that can operate across the entire spectrum of military operations. The littorals are where American influence and power will be needed most often; for forward-deployed naval forces, the littorals are a starting point as well as a destination. See the control of the cont

OPERATIONAL CONCEPTS

An examination of the Navy and Marine Corps operational concepts will identify the common elements of operational design. This will involve several Navy and Marine Corps publications and documents to identify the key elements and principles of the operational concepts.

Navy Operational Concept

The discussion of the evolving Navy operational concept must involve an examination of the progression of naval operational concepts from conception to the present. The current doctrine is provided by *Naval Warfare* (NDP 1). The change in naval operational concepts began with the publication of ...*From the Sea* and continued with the publication of subsequent

documents: Forward...From the Sea (1994), Forward...From the Sea. The Naval Operational Concept (1997), and most recently the article "Anytime, Anywhere. A Navy for the 21st Century", written by Admiral Johnson, CNO. To fully understand the overall naval operational concept, all the documents should be read in full, in sequence. They provide a progressive development of the guidance and principles of the concept. The key elements of each of the documents follows.

Naval Warfare (NDP 1) is the Navy's publication that establishes the doctrine and guidance for the Navy operations. It provides the doctrine, principles, and guidance to organize, train, equip, and employ both the Navy and Marine Corps. "The basic role of our naval forces is to promote and defend our national interests by maintaining maritime superiority, contributing to regional stability, conducting operations on and from the sea, seizing or defending advanced naval bases, and conducting such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of naval campaigns."

...From the Sea. This joint Navy and Marine Corps White Paper was the first document to identify a change in focus for future naval forces. While NDP 1 establishes the doctrine for the Navy, ...From the Sea established the naval operational concept. An emphasis on expeditionary roles replaced the old "Maritime Strategy" of the 1980's¹¹ and shifted the Navy's focus from a global threat to regional challenges and opportunities. ¹² Direction was given to concentrate on littoral warfare and maneuver from the sea¹³ by providing the nation a naval expeditionary force shaped for joint operations, operating forward from the sea, and tailored for national needs. ¹⁴ These naval forces would provide: ¹⁵

- -Swift response, on short notice, to crisis on distant lands
- -Structure to build power from the sea
- -Sustainment for long term operations
- -Unrestricted transit and overflight capabilities to enter the scene of action

Additionally, the naval forces were tasked to focus on four key operational capabilities: 16

- -Command, control, and surveillance
- -Battlespace dominance
- -Power projection
- -Force sustainment

Forward...From the Sea. This document was also a joint White Paper signed by the Navy and Marine Corps in 1994. Forward...From the Sea built upon the guidance provided in ...From the Sea and emphasized peacetime operations, crisis response, and regional conflicts. A major review of strategy and force requirements resulted in a shift in the Department of Defense's focus to new dangers - - chief among which is aggression by regional powers - - and the necessity for power projection to protect and defend U.S. interests, friends, and allies. Additionally, five fundamental roles were identified: 19

- -Power projection
- -Sea control and maritime supremacy
- -Strategic deterrence
- -Strategic sealift
- -Forward naval presence

Forward...From the Sea. The Navy Operational Concept. This was the third in a series of joint Navy/Marine Corps White Papers that continued the thrust of the previous documents, but emphasized the importance of joint and coalition operations. It also provided direction on how to operate forward from the sea across the three components of National Military Strategy: peacetime engagement, deterrence and conflict prevention, and fight and win.²⁰

This is also the first document that reflects the Marine Corps concept of *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*. It states, "The Navy will be a full partner in developing new amphibious warfare concepts and capabilities for implementing the Marine Corps concept Operational Maneuver from the Sea by providing enhanced naval fires, force protection, command and

control, surveillance and reconnaissance, and logistics support ashore - - enabling the high tempo operations envisioned by OMFTS."²¹

"Anytime, Anywhere. A Navy for the 21st Century." The most recent document on the naval operational concept is Admiral Johnson's article "Anytime, Anywhere. A Navy for the 21st Century." Admiral Johnson provided the following guidance: "As it looks into the 21st century, the Navy is redefining seapower to shape the strategic environment, fight through any opposition, and project and sustain enough power ashore – carrier air, gunfire, missiles, and Marines – to deter a conflict, stop an aggressor, or pave the way for heavier joint forces. Simply put, the U.S. Navy will influence, directly and decisively, events ashore from the sea - - anytime, anywhere:"²²

Synopsis of Navy Operational Concept

The Navy has adeptly assessed the requirements for future naval expeditionary operations and set in motion a concept to meet those challenges. The focus of the evolving operational concept is a flexible, forward deployable, naval expeditionary force capable of influencing events ashore from the sea. This force can be tailored for the mission, possess enabling capabilities to facilitate larger joint forces, and execute missions across the entire spectrum of military operations. The basis of the concept is the ability to operate from the sea; the ability to command and control, maneuver, provide fires, and sustain the force from the sea. The sea creates an advantage over the enemy. It provides operating space for naval forces while creating an obstacle for enemy forces. The over-arching objective of the concept, as stated in all the publications, is to operate forward, from the sea, to influence events ashore. The endstate is a new direction in the Navy: naval expeditionary force, shaped for joint operations, tailored for national needs, operating forward... from the sea. 23

Marine Corps Operational Concept

Operational Maneuver from the Sea (OMFTS). The warfighting doctrine of the Marine Corps comes from three main documents: Warfighting (MCDP 1), Expeditionary Operations (MCDP 3), and the concept paper Operational Maneuver from the Sea. Warfighting provides the doctrine, Expeditionary Operations gives operational guidance for amphibious operations, and OMFTS details the operational concept. The doctrine of the Marine Corps is one of maneuver warfare²⁴ based on rapid, flexible, and opportunistic maneuver²⁵ that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion and create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation in which he cannot cope. The operational concept is focused on the application of amphibious operations in the future.

Operational Maneuver from the Sea continues the concept articulated in the joint Navy/Marine Corps white Papers, ...From the Sea and Forward...From the Sea. The Navy and Marine Corps present a common vision for a future in which skillfully handled naval forces, focused on maneuver warfare from the sea, enable the United States to exert its influence in the littoral regions of the world.²⁷ The concept paper also identifies the principles, direction, and desired endstate for the Marine Corps' operational concept.

Principles of Operational Maneuver from the Sea²⁸

- -Focuses on an operational objective
- -Uses the sea as maneuver space
- -Generates overwhelming tempo and momentum
- -Pits strength against weakness
- -Emphasizes intelligence, deceptions, and flexibility
- -Integrates all organic, joint, and combined assets

Operational Directions and Endstate²⁹

- -Enhance naval expeditionary force integration
- -Revolutionize forcible entry operations
- -Expand maritime maneuver across the spectrum of conflict

Synopsis of Marine Corps Operational Concept

OMFTS capitalizes on the advantages created by change and the chaos of the littorals. Future amphibious operations will exploit the chaotic situation by taking advantage of the ability to conduct operations from the sea. The key operational ideas -- maneuver, fires, sustainment, and command and control -- will optimize the ability to seabase, while exploiting the sea as maneuver space. Marine forces will be able to achieve objectives ashore, directly from the sea. This change will alleviate the requirement to establish a beachhead and build-up forces ashore prior to maneuvering inland to achieve objectives. This changes the focus from the shoreline to the operational objectives inland.

Comparison of Navy and Marine Corps Operational Concepts

Both Services have effectively adapted to change, while fostering innovative and conceptual thinking to meet future requirements. Both concepts identify the chaos in the littorals as the threat and seek to take advantage of the sea as maneuver space to influence events ashore. The operational concepts have been developed by both services on parallel courses and are merging as a joint Navy/Marine Corps concept - - a Naval Service Operational Concept - - with common elements of operational design: Maneuver, Fires, Sustainment, and Command and Control.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE OPERATIONAL IDEA

Maneuver

The key element of both concepts is maneuver; taking advantage of the sea as maneuver space to project power ashore. The maneuver of naval forces at the operational level will be aimed at a bold bid for victory-- exploiting a significant enemy weakness in order to deal a decisive blow directed against an enemy center of gravity.³⁰ The principles of operational

maneuver from the sea seek to take advantage of the synergistic effects of those advantages of maneuvering from the sea.³¹

The concept of operations will focus on the objective and will not be restricted by limited landing sites or the requirement to build-up forces ashore. The concept of operations for "Operation Husky", the amphibious landing by Allied Forces on Sicily, was restricted by the desire and need to establish a beachhead before maneuvering inland to seize objectives. The plan was not focused on the enemy's center of gravity or the objectives, thus slowing the momentum of the attack and allowing the enemy to escape to the mainland of Italy. The ability to maneuver from the sea, eliminating the shoreline as an obstacle or intermediate objective, will allow forces to concentrate on the application of combat power directly to operational objectives and the enemy's center of gravity. The sea will enhance our maneuver while restricting the enemy's ability to maneuver against us. This will increase force protection and aid in the achievement of battlespace dominance. Surprise and deception will be optimized in order to strike at a decisive time and place of our choice creating greatly increased tempo and momentum.

Fires

"Expeditionary fire support assists maritime forces in delivering the decisive blow to an enemy by coordinated aviation, naval surface, and ground based fires directly attacking enemy centers of gravity at a critical vulnerability or by ground force supported by such fires — maneuvering to attack an enemy center of gravity." Fire support for future amphibious operations will be provided predominantly by sea based platforms. Fire support assets maneuvering at sea will be able to strike operational objectives from the sea. This will greatly influence the battlespace without the requirement to maneuver a large number of cumbersome

fire support assets ashore. Sea basing fires will reduce the footprint ashore; increase mobility and maneuverability, reduce sustainment requirements, and alleviate the need for combat units to provide security for vulnerable fire support assets.

Even with precision long-range fire from the sea, there will be a need for highly maneuverable and responsive fire support assets ashore to support maneuver elements.

Successful maneuver requires combined arms. There will always be the need and desire for suppressive fires. Abundant and responsive suppressive fire enhances maneuver. A fire support system capable of meeting the needs of operational maneuver -- highly mobile and self-sustaining -- will need to be developed to provide adequate and responsive fires ashore.

Sustainment

"Naval forces carry the striking power of aircraft, guns, missiles, and Marine forces that can execute operations ashore immediately, without an assembly period or a lengthy logistics buildup. If conflict should continue over an extended period, naval forces can remain on station through augmentation and resupply by combat logistic ships. With provisions made for onstation replacement of personnel and ships, such operations can be continued indefinitely."³⁴

Sustainment for future amphibious operations will rely on the Navy/Marine Corps concept of "seabased logistics". Future sustainment operations will be based at sea alleviating the requirement to establish logistic build-up ashore. This concept is based on five tenants:³⁵

- -Primacy of the sea base
- -Reduced demand
- -In-stride sustainment
- -Adoptive response and joint operations
- -Force closure and reconstitution at sea

The required number of forces ashore will be reduced. This will reduce the need for security of logistic sites, creating more forces available for combat missions. Fewer forces ashore

means less sustainment required ashore resulting in less time and effort to redeploy forces in preparation for subsequent missions. Sea based logistics also provides a "building block" tailored for the specific mission, but capable of expanding, at sea, as necessary to support joint forces. Sea based logistics is a combat multiplier.

Command and Control

"Naval Forces will be integrated into networked command and control systems that provide a common tactical picture of the battlespace to all commanders and are fully interoperable with joint command and control systems." The naval expeditionary force of the future will be able to provide the operational commander: on the scene command and control capable of responding to any crisis, the ability to command and control afloat or ashore as necessary, and the enabling capability to introduce larger forces or higher echelons of command into the existing command and control structure.

The element of command and control pulls the entire concept together, but is the area that still requires the most attention by both Services. There has been much debate on the validity of current doctrine as it applies to the issue of the command relationship between the Commander Amphibious Task Force (CATF) and Commander Landing Force (CLF) for future operations. So much so, that this issue is yet to be resolved. Instead of wrestling with the issue of command, (CATF v. CLF), the focus should be on a concept which takes advantage of the situation created by the successful maneuver of a naval expeditionary force.

The concept for command and control needs to be kept simple and applicable to all military operations, not just amphibious operations. "We will have to merge our sea control seamlessly into control of the littorals and fully integrate our capabilities into the land battle." The issue is not the location of the CLF (afloat or ashore), but the issue of when the CLF takes

command. According to our current doctrine, the CLF takes command when his headquarters is established ashore. Since Operational Maneuver from the Sea no longer focuses on the establishment of a force beachhead line and the build-up of forces ashore, neither should the issue of command and control. The focus is on maneuver from the sea, seamless maneuver that starts at sea and continues directly to the objective(s). This should also be the focus for the issue of command and control. The CLF will have to be in command and control of forces as soon as they launch or in command of the entire naval expeditionary force from the beginning.

RELEVANCE TO FUTURE OPERATIONAL COMMANDERS

Future naval expeditionary forces, capable of executing the naval concepts that have been discussed in this paper, will be as vital in the future as they are today. "The unique capabilities inherent in naval expeditionary forces have never been in higher demand from U.S. theater commanders - - the regional commanders-in-chief - - as evidenced by operations in Somalia, Haiti, Cuba, and Bosnia, as well as our continuing contribution to the enforcement of United Nations sanctions against Iraq."³⁸

Future naval expeditionary forces will provide far greater operational reach and greatly increase the operational commander's capabilities across the entire spectrum of military operations. The primary capabilities of future naval expeditionary forces fall into four main categories: forward presence, crisis response, enabling force, and major regional contingency.

Forward Presence

Forward presence is a unique capability of naval expeditionary forces and is key to our National Security Strategy. Forward-deployed naval forces provide deterrence, on scene

capability, and commitment. They provide presence throughout the world, help to deter conflicts before they arise, and attain a rapid response if a conflict or crisis should occur.³⁹

Forward-deployed naval expeditionary forces also provide immediate on the scene capabilities. In the future, these capabilities will be significantly enhanced and provide the operational commander with far greater operational reach. Not only will the commander have a force on the scene, capable of executing missions across the entire spectrum of military operations, but he will also be able to reach much farther inland from the sea. This far greater presence and influence inland from the sea will be accomplished without the worry of impeding on the sovereignty of any nation (except, of course, the one in conflict). Additionally, this force will be capable of continuos sustainment from the sea and require no great build-up of assets ashore.

Forward presence has been a long time characteristic of the Navy and Marine Corps and is a display of U.S. commitment and resolve to our allies and friends. ⁴⁰ This commitment helps to build and develop our joint and multinational capabilities. Through forward presence, we are able to conduct joint and multinational training and exercises, which greatly increase our readiness and capabilities. The operational commander will be able to increase the joint operational skills of the forward-deployed units, while training our allies in the improved concepts of naval expeditionary operations. It gives the U.S. the chance to train and test concepts while training our allies in these same concepts.

Crisis Response

"Naval forces provide the National Command Authorities the tools to respond to a full range of needs, from disaster relief and humanitarian assistance to forcible entry and strike operations. Naval flexibility — as shown in our forward deployed posture, mobility, and self-

sustainability — enables us to control the seas and provide diplomatic leverage, in peace or time of crisis."⁴¹ Future naval expeditionary forces, such as a MEU (SOC), will be able to provide improved capabilities for crisis response with quicker response time and greater reach.

Future capabilities will allow the force to respond more rapidly due to increased range of operations in terms of maneuver, fires, and command and control. The force will be able to respond sooner without having to "steam" to an over the horizon location in the vicinity of the crisis. The naval expeditionary force will be able to respond to the complete spectrum of military operations from greater distances at sea.

Additionally, as the naval force closes with the scene of the crisis, while continuing to respond to the crisis, the operational reach increases much farther inland. These capabilities, coupled with greater sustainment capabilities already mentioned, result in much greater operational reach, increased influence from the sea, quicker response time without increased sustainment requirements, and reduces the footprint ashore.

Enabling Force

Naval expeditionary forces will act as an enabling force capable of providing the base structure for follow-on forces, initial sustainment with the capability to support continuos joint operations form the sea, and a command and control system and structure capable of supporting a JTF Commander as the force expands.

The task organization of a naval expeditionary force can be tailored by operational requirements and become one of the basic building blocks for maritime and joint multinational options. ⁴² This force will be capable of striking directly at operational objectives from the sea while securing necessary facilities to allow the introduction of much larger follow-on forces, such as the Army, Air Force, or larger allied forces. The improved sustainment capabilities of

future naval expeditionary forces will allow for the initial response without concern for build-up ashore. Additionally, the sustainment capabilities will provide the Joint Task Force the ability to expand sustainment at sea while supporting operations ashore. Future systems will allow the sustainment package to grow at sea and tailor support to the specific needs of the task force. The ability to sustain the joint force from the sea, without the need for build-up ashore and the required security, increases forces available to support primary missions.

Most importantly, the naval forces will be able to respond to crisis and provide the enabling capacity for joint or multinational task force command and control ⁴³ from flagships and carriers, as in Operation Restore/Uphold Democracy in Haiti. ⁴⁴ With a flexible command and control structure already in place and operating, a Joint Task Force Commander can command afloat or shift command ashore, depending on the situation. ⁴⁵

Major Regional Contingency (MRC)

The two primary capabilities that the naval expeditionary force will be able to provide for a MRC are its enabling capability and as a force multiplier. After achieving the initial objectives to allow for the introduction of follow on forces, naval forces can continue to operate as an integrated part of a larger joint or multinational force or disengage to respond to further missions or other needs for their presence.⁴⁶

Additionally, the naval expeditionary force, as part of a larger force, acts as a force multiplier. The landing at Inchon is a great example of a naval expeditionary force greatly increasing the operational capabilities of a land force. A highly maneuverable and powerful force capable of penetrating an enemy weakness -- taking advantage of operational maneuver from the sea -- to strike directly at a critical strength or center of gravity greatly increases the lethality of any force. Naval expeditionary forces will be able to project a full range of power from the sea

that includes: long range and accurate fires, naval strike aircraft, continuous sustainmnet, flexible and adaptable command and control, and highly maneuverable Marine forces conducting operations ashore supported by naval fires.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

Some may argue that these operational concepts remain two separate and divergent Service concepts too reliant on technology. I have shown in this paper that these two concepts are actually converging naval concepts derived from a common aim. These two Service concepts can not exist separately or individually; they are connected and dependent upon one another. To maneuver from the sea requires the joint effort of both the Navy and the Marine Corps.

There is a relation to technology, but not a reliance. The concepts are based on change; change in technology, change in situation, and a change in thinking. It is this change that gives the concept it's advantage, the ability to take advantage of change. The synergistic effects of maneuver, fires, sustainment, and command and control from the sea gives us an advantage when operating in the chaotic environment of the littorals while creating a disadvantage for the enemy. The concepts recognize and support the idea that change is continuous. They recognize that the ability to operate effectively in a changing, even chaotic, situation is an advantage.

"Our naval forces contribute decisively to U.S. global leadership and are vital to shaping an environment that enhances our national security. A strong naval team -- capable of deterrence, war at and from the sea and operations other than war -- is essential to that effort. Our forward presence, timely crisis response, and sustainable power projection provide naval and joint force commanders a broad and flexible array of combat capability." The concepts are based on sound

operational design. Improvements in technology will only continue to enhance the concepts, as we continue to take advantage of changing and advancing technology.

The Navy and Marine Corps have conducted an accurate assessment of future challenges, progressively developed operational concepts based on maneuver from the sea, and continue to foster innovative thinking through joint experimentation, wargaming, and exercises. The Navy Operational Concept and Operational Maneuver from the Sea are compatible concepts capable of integration as a single Naval Service Operational Concept.

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⁴¹ Ibid., 11.

⁴² Ibid., 6.

⁴³ Navy Department, <u>From the Sea</u>, 2.

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